

H1N1 vs. Seasonal Flu

What Senior Citizens Need to Know



SEASONAL FLU

How do I prevent getting the seasonal flu?

The first and most important way to prevent or at least reduce the risk of complications of the seasonal flu is to get a seasonal flu vaccination each year.

- The “flu shot” - an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle. The seasonal flu shot is approved for use in people 6 months of age and older, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.

Why is it important to get a flu shot?

Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people), and serious problems from influenza can happen at any age. People age 65 years and older, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and young children are more likely to get complications from influenza. Pneumonia, bronchitis, and sinus and ear infections are three examples of complications from flu. The flu can make chronic health problems worse.

Who can get a flu shot?

People who should get a seasonal flu vaccination each year include:

1. Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday
2. Pregnant women
3. People 50 years of age and older
4. People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
5. People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
6. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
 - a. Health care workers
 - b. Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
 - c. Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)
7. Anyone who wants to reduce their risk of infection with seasonal flu.

Will the seasonal flu vaccination protect me from the H1N1 influenza A pandemic strain of flu?

NO. Because the H1N1 influenza A pandemic strain of flu has never been seen before, the seasonal flu vaccination **will not** provide protection against it. Therefore, individuals will need to obtain separate vaccinations for H1N1 in order to be fully protected this flu season.

H1N1 FLU

Who should get this new flu vaccine?

Eventually, everyone. Initially however, the vaccine will be made available to individuals in the following federally identified priority groups. These groups were identified based on who is most at risk for severe illness from the H1N1 virus:

- Pregnant women
- Household contacts and caregivers of infants younger than 6 months of age
- All children and young adults ages 6 months through 24 years
- Healthcare and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel
- People aged 25-64 years with certain high-risk medical conditions

Current studies indicate the risk for infection among persons age 65 or older is much less than the risk for younger age groups. Therefore, as vaccine supply and demand for vaccine among younger age groups is being met, programs and providers will offer vaccination to people over the age of 65.

How can I protect others and myself from the H1N1 flu and the seasonal flu?

As with any influenza virus, individuals are encouraged to take the following steps to reduce spread:

- ***Wash your hands*** thoroughly with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to get rid of most germs and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- ***Stay home when you are sick*** to avoid spreading illness to co-workers and friends. Individuals should remain at home until they have remained fever free, without the use of fever-reducing medications, for at least 24 hours.
- ***Cough or sneeze into a tissue***, and properly dispose of used tissues. If you have no tissue, cover your face with your elbow.
- ***Stay healthy*** by eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water and getting adequate rest and exercise.

Stay informed and stay aware

Check our website at: <http://www.kdheks.gov/H1N1> or email questions to: H1N1FluInfo@kdheks.gov
Toll-Free hotline available Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5p.m. at 1-877-427-7317